

Folklore Institute

OF

RUMANIA

THE rich, varied and lively folklore of the Rumanian People's Republic contains a vast treasury of songs, dances and popular literature, individual and collective creations, that are in a continuous process of creative transformation expressing the life, the struggle and ideals of the people in the past and the present in their wonderful artistic achievements.

The collections, researches and studies of folklore, begun in our country since the last century, have brought to light interesting and, valuable material. Even in the past there were a great number of Rumanian folklorists who, enthused by their love for popular art, initiated the study of Rumanian folklore on a scientific basis and left us a precious heritage serving as the foundation for the researches of today.

Since the establishment of the popular-democratic regime in our country, the working-class has demonstrated its appreciation of popular artistic creations in the struggle to forge a new culture. An illustration of this is—among others—the founding of the Folklore Institute in Bucharest in the year 1949. The foundation act laid down the main tasks of the Institute as follows :

- (a) the collection, dissemination and scientific study of folklore;
- (b) the initiation of folklore researches

and training of research workers in this field.

- (c) the stimulation of interest in folklore.

Parallel with the Bucharest Folklore Institute there has been founded in Cluj a branch-section for the collection of the folklore of the national minorities and research into their influence on one another. The Institute initially began its work on two archives of folklore: one belonging to the Rumanian Composers' Society, and the other to the Ministry of Arts, both founded in 1948. In the same year, an experimental popular orchestra, called "Barbu Lautaru", was also created which after having reached a high level of development was converted into a representative professional ensemble, and in 1953, was placed under the "George-Enescu" State Philharmonic Orchestra.

Starting its work with a small staff, the Folklore Institute has expanded its activities and today includes 42 specialists, an up-to-date technical department and a rich archive which in the last eight years has risen from 20,000 folklore records to 65,000. To this should be added 20,000 pieces of oral notations collected by our classical forerunners pertaining to the former Auxiliary Fund.

The recording was made in the beginning on 14,602 cylinders, later on 2,715 gramo-

phone discs and from the foundation of the Institute on tape recorders (1,000) the number of which is steadily increasing.

The recording of popular prose by means of tape recorders enables the registration of the most subtle shades, peculiar to local idioms, phonetically transcribed with the utmost minuteness, and helps in the study of dialectology. One can well imagine how difficult it must have been in the beginning when this was done by dictation, interrupting the thread of the story,—with insufficient phonetical signs and inadequate shorthand-writing.

The entire scientific body consists of three sections—the three branches of speciality in music, literature and choreography. It is organised in small groups, each one working at its specific problems, periodically gathering in sections for the discussion of more difficult problems of speciality.

A separate section of documentation, library and card-index is open to the public at large to whom it gives information and advice. To this section belongs also a special department for the Institute's relations with foreign countries.

The Institute also disposes of a technical department containing a workshop and a studio—for handling and upkeep of sound-recording instruments. There is also a cinematographical section which has 9,000 photos representing costumes, types of dances of different regions of the country and popular artists. There are also eight short documentary films, representing the various movements and postures in dancing.

There is, finally, an administrative department which looks after the work of the specialists and their living conditions.

Field expeditions are organised from time to time to investigate some specific problems or to collect further material on the folklore of a particular region. Such expeditions are composed of 4—10 persons, selected from each of the three sections, assisted by a technician for recording and a cameraman. These field investigations last from 10 to 30 days. The group is headed by a leader who is responsible for the work. Before leaving, the members

of this expedition carry out an exhaustive study of the existing material in the archive of the Institute. Thereupon, a small advanced group is sent out to prepare and examine the material on the spot. Only when this has been accomplished does the entire group leave for the field investigation. Besides recording, the music and texts are also taken down "by ear". Additional information is collected regarding particular songs and folk singers by means of a set form. Reliable informants with a vast repertoire are brought to Bucharest so that their lore could be recorded in the studio of the Institute in more favourable conditions.

On their return, the group proceeds to draw up an inventory and catalogue working out a classification and transcription of the collected material. Then, before the whole staff of the Institute, a report is presented, illustrated with the newly-gathered material. Side by side, periodical public lectures for the dissemination and popularisation of the folklore material are organised outside the Institute.

The collective material is used for special folklore studies for the preparation of anthologies or monographs for publication. This material is available to composers, the Rumanian Broadcasting Company and other musical Institutes.

The Folklore Institute has published some anthologies of songs, dances and popular literature as well as works on folklore. Numerous collections at present are under print. These publications are exchanged with similar foreign publications and our Institute is in constant and close touch and correspondence with more than 110 foreign institutions and students of folklore abroad.

The "Revista de Folclor" is one of the main mediums for the development and dissemination of Rumanian folklore. This review, which has been appearing quarterly since 1956, has been highly commended by folklorists in our country and abroad. The results of our researches are made known to the whole world through this medium.

In 1958 will begin the publication of a great collection of Rumanian folklore. It will be completed in twenty years and consist of approximately 40 volumes (2 volumes of about

1,000 pages each year). Five groups of folklorists have been set up for the editing and publication of the first five volumes for which the unlimited help of the State authorities has been obtained.

A folklore-bibliography, a thematic catalogue of folk epics and an atlas of Rumanian folklore are likewise under preparation.

The staff has become insufficient to meet the Institute's steadily increasing tasks. That is why in many provincial centres we have founded circles of amateur folklorists guided

by the Folklore Institute and financially aided by the Popular Councils.

This is a brief survey of the organisation of our Folklore Institute, its methods of work and the results obtained. The work is being done with great love and devotion for the folk creations for, without them the full depth and beauty of our folklore cannot be revealed. Under the wise care of the Rumanian People's Government, we are carrying on our work with ever-growing zeal, conscious that we serve the culture of our fatherland and thereby universal culture.

